

Indian Rose Annual - IRA 2015

Sustainable rose breeding / growing for tropical Asia – some possibilities

An Editorial Overview

Girija and M. S. Viraraghavan

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The ideas are arranged country-wise.

Before taking up these details country-wise it is appropriate to refer to two very important presentations at the conference which deal with the overall situation regarding wild and heritage roses in our region.

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Another presentation of equal importance, by Mr. Robert Mattock, deals with the role of the Silk Road which traverses our region in the movement and distribution of rose species as well as heritage roses in Asia and Europe. The role of enthusiasts in the conservation and creation of rose hybrids all along this route is emphasized in this path breaking write-up. We understand that the earlier emphasis on heritage roses traveling by the sea route from Asia to Europe gives only one part of the process of distribution of roses. The Silk Road has been equally, if not more significant, in this process.

We now take up the country wise distribution with an emphasis on relatively less known heritage roses / species.

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Book of Roses' (1974) that no work has been done with this rose should not be a deterrent, as at least one distinctive seedling has been raised from it by me (codename 'Virrosea') (see photograph).

Another interesting possibility is the Japanese form of *R. roxburghii* var. *hirtula*, (or is it a new species (?)), which has the very unusual characteristic of developing typical tree form, reaching heights of 5 m and upwards. Work with this rose may yield roses which grow like small trees, hopefully rivaling the flowering cherries, also from Japan.

Incidentally, the well known *R. roxburghii plena* as seen in Japan in the Sanapia Herb Garden of the Tatsuzaki family, appears much more floriferous with a somewhat different flower form. Use of this for breeding is another possibility.

A very beautiful variant of *R. multiflora*, *R. multiflora adenochaeta* is wild in Japan. Louis Lens, the great Belgian hybridiser, has already released some lovely shrub roses using this species, for e.g., his Spray series - 'White Spray', 'Pink Spray' etc. But much more is possible. I will not go into detail - the subject of roses in Japan is scheduled to be dealt with, in the conference, by the well known rose scientist, Dr. Yuki Mikanagi.

CHINA : I limit myself to two very interesting heritage roses which have recently reached the rest of the world, as the main subject is dealt with in our conference by Prof. Dr. Guoliang Wang. Indeed China is too vast a country to be dealt with in an outline of this type.

The first rose I would like to mention is the *R. gigantea* hybrid, 'Lijiang Road Climber'. This is a rose combining incredible beauty, in pink, with extraordinary vigour and work with it should lead to remarkable results. Unfortunately, at least under my conditions, both seed and pollen fertility seem to be below par, but the possibilities are so dramatic and merit attention in rose breeding.

An extraordinary old China rose is again from Lijiang – the 'China Rose of the Temple of the Ten Thousand Flowered Camellia'. This lovely rose shows the typical color change from pink to red as the flower matures, is very fertile and vigorous and a must for warm climate rose breeding. A rose species which has recently reached the outside world is the warm climate species, *R. cymosa*, which is a shrub bearing big clusters of single flowers. It is easy to imagine a line of beautiful landscape roses for warm climates if this species could be used in rose breeding. Indeed, Dr. David Byrne of Texas A& M University has already started work on this line.

LAOS : The extensive explorations by Dr. Yoshihiro Ueda in this country are dealt with in his article published in this annual. Arising from his explorations I would like to highlight the following possibilities:

1. *R. tunquinensis* : This species occurs further south than almost all other rose species, in the Bolovens Plateau of Laos at the low altitude of 600m. Warm climate rose breeding would surely benefit from using this species.
2. 'Hume's Blush Tea Scented China', Laos form: Dr. Ueda has described a form of this well known China rose, one of the four 'Stud Chinas' he found in Laos (pictured in his article and reproduced here). The possibilities afforded by this discovery are immense as the original form of 'Hume's Blush' appears to have been lost.

THAILAND : Two very interesting heritage roses have been noticed in Thailand and both of these offer new possibilities in rose breeding.

1. One is 'Gulap Mon'. This is a very fragrant dark pink to red rose in the tradition of the rose variously called 'Maggie' / 'Pacific' / 'Kakinada Red'. This latter is the rose which seems to have traveled around the world and is now grown in countries as far apart as USA, Bermuda, and India. 'Gulap Mon' is fertile, unlike 'Kakinada Red', in my conditions.
2. 'Chulalongorn': This is a very vigorous red rose in the Hybrid Perpetual tradition, very fragrant, and deserves the attention of rose breeders.

In passing, mention must be made of what is called 'Cosmos Rose' in Thailand. This is a fairly compact, single, with clusters of pink and white flowers, in the *R. multiflora* tradition. This is very fertile as well as repeat flowering and warrants attention.

There is also a popular miniature rose called 'Rama IV', after one of the kings of Thailand. It resembles, to some extent, the well known heritage China, 'Perla de Alacanda'. When we visited Thailand we found to our surprise that the China rose called 'Telengana Pink' in India (see below under 'India') was growing happily in a little town in the Petchaboon Hills.

We have included, in this annual, a write-up by Thailand's premier rosarian, Mr. Pojana Nagavajara, affectionately called 'The Father of Roses in Thailand'. What he describes may aptly be called the decline and fall of the modern rose in Thailand, thus underlining the need for separate lines of breeding for Asian climates.

MALAYSIA : Investigations by Mrs. Mariam Ghazali reveal the existence of a group of well adapted roses widely cultivated in this very tropical country. These are the so called 'village roses' of which there are many, in colors like magenta, white, pink and even yellow, which are illustrated in her article in this annual. These roses again are clearly of interest to warm climate rose breeders.

SINGAPORE : Mr. Tuan Ching of Singapore, who shuttles between New York and

Singapore will be giving a talk at the conference, on the heritage roses in Singapore, including some Bourbon-type roses as well as Tea/China types. Pictures of these are published along with the text of his lecture

VIETNAM : With a common border with China we would expect that there would be several heritage roses of Chinese origin in this country, apart from the local heritage rose kinds. Unfortunately we could get information only on two kinds. The first, courtesy of Ms. Nguyen Ngoc Anh, relates to a China type rose somewhat like 'Old Blush', which is apparently common in the country. Mr. Guilio Baistrocchi of Italy, who visited Sapa in Vietnam has furnished us with a series of photographs of an interesting rose, in shades of light and dark pink, quite full, and looking like a Tea rose. We publish a picture of this rose. In many ways Vietnam is an unexplored gold mine of plant species. A great opportunity awaits the enterprising rose enthusiast who takes on the challenge of what heritage roses are available in this country.

MYANMAR (BURMA) : Our only contact in Burma is Mr. U Soe Nyunt who sent us a photograph he took in 2008 of *R. clinophylla*, which he found in the northern part of Myanmar near the Irrawaddy River Bank. This is perhaps the first time that a picture of the Burmese version of *R. clinophylla* is being published.

Dr. Yuki Mikanagi has visited Burma and she collected a blush China Tea in Archine Gatin area, en route to Mt. Victoria. We show a photograph of this very full cup-shaped flower .

INDIA : A large number of heritage roses exist in India, a few discovered, and many awaiting discovery. Two of the most interesting of these 'found roses' are the China rose 'Telengana Pink', widely grown, and which extends to Thailand as mentioned earlier. This rose has defied identification even by the well known rose authority Mr. Fred Boutin of California, USA. As 'Telengana Pink' is very well adapted indeed to warm climates it merits the serious attention of rose breeders. The other widespread heritage rose is the Bourbon, 'Kakinada Red', already referred to. This again is very well adapted to the south peninsular region of India and thrives even in the southern part of the eastern coast (Coromandel Coast), which is a very difficult place indeed to grow roses.

Among the several heritage roses available are four 'found roses' with the study names of 'Renu's Apricot Tea', 'Rajakkad China', 'Madurai Tea' and 'Holiday Home Climber'. The first is from our friend Renu's garden in the Western Ghat area (Cardamom Hills) of Kerala State, 1100 m altitude, and 'Rajakkad China' is from the Palni Hills, an eastern offshoot of the Western Ghats, found in the garden of Rajakkad Resort, at about the same altitude. 'Madurai Tea' was located in the 'plants for sale' in a nursery in Madurai town (Tamil Nadu). Any rose has to be very

heat resistant indeed to withstand the incredibly hot climate of this town. The 'Holiday Home Climber' is a very vigorous climber with large single flowers in pink and white. It is remontant. The foliage has China rose characteristics and is growing well in Mrs. Helga Brichet's garden. We have published pictures of these four roses. But to reiterate what we said earlier, there is little doubt that there are quite a number of heritage roses waiting to be discovered in various parts of India.

Mrs. Helga Brichet in her lecture on Italian Rose Explorers in India will mention about the heritage roses discovered by Mr. Vicky Ducrot in Rajasthan.

Some famous heritage roses are fairly common, for e.g., the very old Tea rose, 'Madame Falcot', which was apparently lost in the country of its origin, France, and which we could find and send to the well-known connoisseurs of Tea roses, Becky and John Hook of Roseraie du Desert, France.

PAKISTAN : Dr Mahmooda Hashmi will deal with the old roses and species in Pakistan in her lecture at the conference, so we will confine ourselves to mentioning just a few. The first is that remarkable rose, the red form of *R. foetida persiana*, found by Vicky Ducrot in the Hindu Kush Mountains. Perhaps surprisingly even *R. laevigata* and its hybrid, 'Anemone', are naturalized in Pakistan in the area around the hill-station of Murree. These are called 'Mardan White' and 'Mardan Pink', both in Pakistan and in north India.

AFGHANISTAN and IRAN : Afghanistan is the home of that brilliant yellow species, *R. ecae* - great hybridizing potential here, as is evident from that astonishing species hybrid 'Golden Chersonese', bred by E.F. Allen, Hon. Scientific Adviser to the R.N.R.S., U.K., in the 1970's. It is in fact surprising that a shrub rose of such eye-catching beauty remains relatively obscure, but its existence is an obvious pointer of what is possible.

Like China, Iran is too vast a country with a long tradition of rose culture, in which there are surely many heritage roses waiting to be discovered. Some of the roses of Iran are described by Dr. Yoshihiro Ueda, in his article reproduced in this annual. But we cannot resist speculating why that other golden rose of Iran and other regions of central Asia, *R. hemispherica*, has never been used in rose breeding. There is a tantalizing tale of a mystery golden rose, a very large shrub, thriving in the shade of the Great Mosque in Kashgar, a town at the extreme western boundary of China, as it stretches into central Asia. This must surely be *R. hemispherica*, but how does it grow in shade??

ISLANDS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN : Maldives, Mauritius and Reunion lie in the paths of ships coming from China and further east, bound for Europe, particularly in the 19th century. Roses very difficult to find in Europe, like for e.g., 'Slater's Crimson China', are naturalized in Mauritius, as described by Gwen Fagan, the well known

rosarian from S. Africa. An extract from her book 'Roses in the cape of Good Hope' forms part of this annual.

We should also mention that the first Bourbon rose, 'R. Edward' (Edouard) seems to have originated in Reunion (earlier called Ile de Bourbon). But there are alternative theories on the origin of this pioneer hybrid in the intriguingly titled presentation by Mr. Behcet Ciragan, "Traders, Tulips and Roses".

MIDDLE EAST : Information on heritage roses in the Middle East has been impossible to find though there can be little doubt that many roses of these kinds exist. All that we could secure is a wonderful article on Sufi poetry about roses from that region by Prof. Kawther Mahdi Al-Zwelef of the University of Jordan. Perhaps Mr. Ciragan will throw more light on this region.

We have not dealt with the roses of the northern part of Central Asia as the climate is quite different from the tropical parts of Asia that we have dealt with so far. But we should mention that there are many roses of extraordinary beauty in the area.

In conclusion we would like to emphasise that considering the vast extent of Asia much more remains to be discovered but we felt that at least an outline to begin the process of search for the heritage roses of Asia is very much warranted.

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